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3.1 Many Resources, Many Constraints

As the inventory summaries in the previous chapter indicate, the resources of Point St. George are exceptionally abundant and significant. In many cases – for example, with significant archaeological sites, rare and endangered species, and wetlands – applicable local, state, and federal mandates establish legal requirements for uses and activities related to these resources.

Mapping the various areas at Point St. George that are subject to restrictions or regulations in one form or another results in a “composite constraints map” that covers the majority of the property; further, because the property is located within the Coastal Zone, which promotes resource protection as well as public access, virtually all areas of the site are subject to regulatory controls.



Composite Constraints Map
(all locations approximate).

As discussed further in this chapter, the type of management activities promoted by this plan seek to accommodate the expressed values of the public, while meeting legal requirements in letter and spirit. The activities prescribed by this plan will incorporate all required mitigation measures identified through the environmental review process.

3.2 Natural Resource Threats & Opportunities

The abundant natural resources at Point St. George are threatened by ongoing and potential human activities, including the proliferation of volunteer footpaths and unlawful ¹ use of off-road vehicles in several areas (e.g., the areas immediately east and west of Pebble Beach Drive/Radio Road, and the area north of the parking area at the end of the road). The protection of natural resources, therefore, largely pertains to management of people in vehicles and on foot.

¹ County of Del Norte Ordinance 2003-04 prohibits the operation of any motor vehicle upon or across lands at Point St. George other than upon an improved road surface or designated parking area, except as allowed on the beach by permit.

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In addition, actions undertaken pursuant to the management plan may affect the natural resources of the site. Such projects may include: construction of public safety and parking improvements, trail improvements or reconstruction, vegetation management and restoration, installation of public service amenities (telephones, trash and recycling receptacles, and restroom facilities), visitor facilities (including possible structures), water lines, wastewater systems, and other possible activities.

Where existing environmental information is up-to-date and provides sufficient evidence that sensitive resources would not be affected, field studies would probably not be necessary. However, sensitive species lists change, and habitat types are not static. Thus, for other areas with known or suspected sensitive habitat areas, including wetlands and rare species habitat, additional evaluations of the project-specific areas that may be affected will be required. Such evaluations must be conducted by qualified scientists, who may recommend strategic approaches to siting improvements or management activities that are compatible with the management plan's goals while protecting sensitive areas within the site. Mitigation measures, if needed, must be identified and carried out in consultation with the responsible regulatory agencies.

Airport Buffer Zone. The eastern side of the Point St. George management area abuts Del Norte County Airport/McNamara Field. Generally, land surrounding a public-use airport must be retained as open and unimproved; these areas may attract birds and other wildlife, which pose hazards to aircraft. County staff have proposed that a 500-foot buffer zone for vegetation management be designated on the Point St. George property parallel to the eastern property line shared with the airport and encompassing approximately 60 acres. While trees on Point St. George in general are not a problem with respect to airport operations, this area directly adjacent to the airport property must be maintained to ensure that vegetation does not penetrate the clear zone. Thus, natural resource protection in this area must accommodate this buffer area for airport safety.

Natural Resource Interpretation. Point St. George offers great opportunities for natural resource interpretation; interpretation activities could be combined with cultural resource interpretation activities, as discussed below. Self-guided tours and pamphlets could be developed. Planning and design for a visitor center should consider natural resource displays and programs. Among the themes that could be presented would be: techniques of habitat management; the ecological functions of wetlands; and the concept of "diversity" as exemplified by the range of habitats and species that are represented at Point St. George.

3.3 Habitat Restoration

Habitat restoration typically involves efforts to improve degraded habitat by re-establishing self-sustaining and functioning environmental conditions, typically those that are thought to resemble native (pre-Euroamerican)

conditions in terms of composition, structure, and function. The Point St. George site provides a mosaic of habitat types; while some relatively small areas may be considered degraded or ruderal (weedy), the ecosystem elements within the site are representative of those occurring on other, similar sites in the region.

Habitat management, which includes “restoration” activities, is to some extent an expression of values – i.e., for various reasons, one type of habitat or set of plant associations is preferred over another. Management may take several different, equally valid alternative courses, depending on the philosophies and decisions of the responsible resource managers.

Early Succession Alternative

One natural resource management approach for public lands at Point St. George would be to manage selected areas for species that are associated with early stages of the ecological succession dynamic. Many of the special status species that occur at Point St. George require habitat characteristics that are associated with early successional plant communities; among these species is the western lily (both state- and federally listed as endangered).

In recent years, however, vegetative succession has been occurring that may ultimately result in a less diverse vegetative structure and replace early successional plant species. Without some sort of vegetation disturbance regime, the sensitive species and unique communities that thrive in early successional plant communities would likely disappear from the site. Vegetation disturbance may have been a factor historically in creating and sustaining the habitat diversity at Point St. George.

Under the “early succession” approach, a program involving periodic, selective, and intensive vegetation disturbance would be conducted. This approach would strive to enhance the habitat characteristics for a number of special status plant species by introducing activities that intentionally reduce thatch and young woody plants, thus arresting natural succession.

Vegetation manipulation may occur as controlled cattle grazing, mowing, or burning. Studies and initial permit applications to date at Point St. George have focused on the use of cattle grazing for habitat management. Grazing has occurred on the site in past decades. Therefore, based on this initial work and historical precedent, the reintroduction of controlled grazing would be a primary habitat management tool essential to the recovery and maintenance of early successional species habitat.

Controlled Grazing. Cattle grazing is used as a resource management tool on public lands by a variety of agencies. At Point St. George, the use of cattle grazing for habitat manipulation would take place under the technical guidance of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game. Generally, cattle would be kept within a designated grazing area much of the year; seasonally, the animals would be moved on a rotational basis into several adjacent fenced areas, where physical

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conditions were conducive to establishment and growth of early succession species. Animals from local agricultural operations would be used; this “management-intensive rotational grazing” would be a habitat management tool, not a commercial operation.

Grazing may be associated with physical effects on habitat and soils, particularly when not closely monitored. At Point St. George, the controlled grazing would include wetland areas. Wetlands on the North Coast of California are routinely used for grazing; management for recovery-level populations of sensitive species need not be at the expense of wetland protection. Monitoring and “adaptive management” are key to a successful, low-impact program.

In areas subject to grazing, the ground cover would, over time, be likely to develop a higher proportion of non-native plants (weeds) than areas not subject to grazing; therefore, an important component of this alternative should be ongoing maintenance activities focused on controlling non-native species, as discussed further below.

Natural Succession Alternative

Another possible habitat management program would be based on a philosophy of allowing natural processes to occur with little or no human intervention. Under this approach, nature would be allowed to “take its course,” and site managers would generally not interfere with natural succession, except as necessary to control exotic species and noxious weeds.

This approach would have some predictable consequences in terms of vegetation succession. Without periodic disturbance, palustrine persistent emergent marshes would be expected to develop less variability, probably becoming dominated by slough sedge or Pacific reedgrass. As time progressed, these wetlands would likely become increasingly populated with woody shrubs, such as willow and wax myrtle. In later stages, wetland areas on the site could become spruce-pine forest.

Non-native Plant Control and Restoration of Degraded Areas

The establishment and proliferation of non-native plant species, some of which are considered to be invasive, may accompany successional shifts. Non-native plant species are often at a competitive advantage over many native species in areas that are regularly disturbed, posing a threat to native plant species (including special status plants) and, as a result, to the native wildlife species (including special status wildlife) that depend upon them. At Point St. George, examples of invasive non-native plants include Himalayaberry, milk thistle, tansy ragwort, and Italian thistle.

Accordingly, to address this situation, this plan provides for an invasive plant vegetation management program to identify and remove such plants. Tasks involving trail improvement and similar on-site improvements or management activities may be combined with invasive plant removal. Local community workdays could be sponsored by a “Friends of Point St. George”

group, aimed at controlling invasive non-native plants while learning about native communities. Areas where non-native plants have been removed would be restored with native vegetation.

3.4 Management for Aleutian Canada Geese

Important feeding and roosting sites for the Aleutian Canada goose exist in the vicinity of Point St. George, including Castle Rock, the Lake Earl Wildlife Area, and agricultural lands near the Smith River. Since its early listing under the federal Endangered Species Act, the official status of the Aleutian subspecies of the Canada Goose has changed first from “endangered” to “threatened” in 1990 and then, as the subspecies recovered, from “threatened” to de-listed in the United States in 2001.

Photo courtesy Aleutian Goose Festival



Aleutian Canada Geese.

While recovery of the goose population is good for the subspecies, the growing number of geese migrating through the region has increased foraging pressures on local public and private lands, including local dairy farms. With changes in habitat and ground cover at Point St. George over the years, goose foraging has shifted away from Point St. George to other public and private lands, particularly in the vicinity of

Lake Earl and the Smith River. One option for vegetation management at Point St. George, therefore, includes providing foraging habitat for these geese, which would be beneficial to the subspecies while possibly reducing their use of grazing pasture and dairy farmland.

3.5 Cultural Resource Threats & Opportunities

Protection of Physical Sites

Although the major archaeological sites on the property have suffered (and continue to suffer) negative effects from a variety of human activities and natural processes, they retain a high degree of integrity and, therefore, maintain a high level of significance. Most of the ongoing adverse effects to the archaeological sites involve natural wind erosion accelerated by foot traffic and illegal digging and artifact collection. If these sites are to maintain their high level of integrity and significance into the future, activities for the protection and stabilization of these non-renewable resources are recommended.

The primary measure to protect existing, undisturbed archaeological components and sites is preserve them in place. Access to these areas should be restricted to authorized persons, and undesignated footpaths crossing or encroaching upon sensitive areas should be closed. This would require rerouting existing trails that cross through archaeological deposits

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and requiring hikers to stay on designated trails. Stabilization and rehabilitation could be achieved through a revegetation program, where the abandoned trails and blow-outs would be covered with native vegetation to help protect the archaeological deposits.

Construction of an on-site facility for a full-time caretaker is part of this plan, to provide around-the-clock security. This facility could be part of the cultural resources center, discussed below. Another provision of this plan is to develop an on-site monitoring program to ensure public cooperation with preservation goals (i.e., comply with trail policies and stop illegal excavation and collection). This monitoring could be combined with a site stewardship program where local volunteers visit the sites on a regular basis to assess their condition and make sure no vandalism is taking place.

Archaeological Resources and Native American Culture

Point St. George offers great educational potential and represents an opportunity to provide the public with accurate information about local Native American history and culture. While local Tribes have a strong, proprietary interest in protecting and preserving sensitive archaeological sites (and in maintaining confidentiality regarding site locations), guided tours related to cultural resources may be possible.

Occasional use of the property for traditional and ceremonial purposes may require that the property (or portions of the property) be closed to the public. Accordingly, cultural resources interpretation policies in the plan include management activities to provide information to the public, while protecting traditional and cultural values.

A wide range of interpretive activities and products could be developed for Point St. George, requiring an equally wide range of time and money. The following discussion provides a continuum of recommendations, beginning with those requiring the least amount of resources to those with more ambitious goals.

Educational pamphlets provide a relatively inexpensive option for summarizing what is known about the prehistoric and historic uses of the Point St. George area. Such materials can range from single folded sheets to small booklets. Another option is to develop traveling displays, which can be set up at local museums, libraries, county fairs, public service gatherings, and other places frequented by large numbers of people.

At its simplest level, the construction of a small visitor center containing displays and pamphlets is recommended to provide public education for people visiting the site. (This center could also house the caretaker, mentioned above.) An on-site center is an effective means of education, because the information is directly linked to the local cultural landscape (i.e., it is made available at the actual location). At a slightly larger scale, the visitor center concept could also include a museum, which would house artifacts that are now kept elsewhere.

Additionally, the center could be expanded to include a living history program, where a Tolowa structure or village could be reconstructed. Similar programs exist at other parks in California and are a highly effective way to illustrate traditional lifeways and maintain some of these traditions among local native peoples. Tribal representatives and others have expressed interest in creating such a “living museum” at Point St. George, which may include reconstruction of a Tolowa village, with interpretive trails and interpreter guides.

In conjunction with an interpretive center, the village site and associated facilities could also be used for local Tolowa events, some including the public and others restricted to a more limited range of people. While detailed design of a living history program is beyond the scope of this Management Plan, this plan does recommend reserving sufficient land area for the interpretive center and related activities in the future. The planned location is within the large parking area at the end of Radio Road.

“Land Laying Outward Place”

Another way to incorporate the Tolowa heritage into the future of this site is through the use of the Tolowa language, such as in the naming of places. For example, the area now called Point St. George is **Taa-ghii~-’a~**, or “Land Laying Outward Place.” Castle Rock is **’Ee-nii-k’wvt**, or “Ground There Upon.” In future planning for the site, Tolowa names should be included with local names wherever possible on maps and in printed materials. Some sample Tolowa words that might be used as place names or in interpretative materials are presented below.

Examples of Tolowa Words that Could Be Used at Point St. George

haa~-chu	(“augmented honk”) goose / geese
sa’s-taa~-’a~	(“spoon laying there place”) Castle Rock Cove
tee-la~	whale / whales
sii~-xu	coast / coastal
mii-ne’	wave / waves
baa-sre	seagull
maa-ghvs	cormorant / shag
taa-nin’	horizon
lat	seaweed
ghvtlh-k’vsh	kelp
ch’aa~-t’i~	sea lion
lhtrii	wind / windy
lhtrii-le’	windy point

Historical Resources

The Point St. George site also offers significant opportunities for historical interpretation, particularly concerning the local marine history, including the story of the *Brother Jonathan* and the Saint George Reef Lighthouse. With cooperation from the County Historical Society and other groups, such as the Saint George Reef Lighthouse Preservation Society, interpretive pamphlets could be developed and made available at the site to explain and interpret the significant historical events that have occurred in the area.

3.6 Recreation & Access to the Shore

Point St. George is a significant recreational resource, drawing many visitors who enjoy a wide variety of activities, including: bird-watching, beachcombing, surfing, clamming, walking on trails and on the beach, surf-fishing, jogging, through-hiking, bicycling, dog-walking, agate-collecting, sight-seeing, botanizing and other forms of nature study, photography, and sunbathing.

Maintaining full access to the shoreline is essential to virtually all members of the public interested in Point St. George. Provisions in this plan include designating specific public trails from the bluff to the beach (and, for protection of sensitive resources, decommissioning other footpaths elsewhere).

Foot trails have developed “naturally” at Point St. George over time by people using the site; trails remaining open to the public should retain the “natural” alignment to the extent possible. One such “natural” trail is located north of the main parking area, over the height-of-land, to the beach. Over time, use of this trail has caused erosion problems, especially at the vista point and over the bluff. This plan recommends that eroded portions of this trail be restored by installing erosion-control improvements or materials as recommended by a registered engineer; in particular, the vista point should be covered with a protective cover, and the trail beyond the vista point should be closed to foot traffic. Another trail where similar improvements are recommended is the trail from the parking area above Garth’s Beach to the shore. Trail improvements should be unobtrusive and kept to a minimum; surfaces should generally be porous to allow rainfall infiltration.



Coastal Access: the Trail to Garth's Beach.

Provisions should be made to allow access to the cliffs and beach for search and rescue purposes. No changes are proposed regarding the existing County process for obtaining beach access permits.

3.7 The California Coastal Trail

Also important, particularly at the state level, is for this management plan to provide for a designated corridor within which the California Coastal Trail may be sited and constructed. State legislation passed in the fall of 2001 calls for the preparation of an inventory map of the California Coastal Trail, a 1,200-mile foot trail supported by the California Coastal Conservancy, non-profit groups, businesses, government agencies, and advocacy groups.

Provisions in this plan include designating a trail corridor across Point St. George on the western margin; this segment of the Coastal Trail would likely be partly on the blufftop and partly on the beach. To meet the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), this plan provides a handicapped parking area, a surfaced access trail, and an overlook point in the vicinity of the old quarry roads near or connecting to the Coastal Trail.

The terms of the grant awards to the County from the Coastal Conservancy, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Wildlife Conservation Board contained requirements for the County to erect signs on the property that (1) identify the land for public use, (2) recognize the contributions of the funding agencies, and (3) refer to the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000. Provisions in this plan include installing the signs required by these funding agencies.

3.8 Nature Walk Trails

With its diversity of habitat types and other interesting natural features, Point St. George would be an outstanding setting for nature trails, which could be open to the public for educational purposes and general enjoyment. Locating such trails, however, is problematic, owing to an inherent conflict between protecting environmentally sensitive areas and providing general public access; nature trails would likely lead to degraded conditions in sensitive areas if freely available to the public. Until there is (as one speaker put it at one of the Community Meetings) a “change in culture,” construction of nature walk trails may have to wait.

In the future, possible locations for nature trails include portions of the site immediately east of Radio Road and in the northeastern portion of the site. Known locations of sensitive plants and archaeological sites should be avoided; however, the trails could include views of vegetation management areas. Trails may need to be elevated in wet areas. For resource protection and security reasons, wetlands between the spruce grove and the eastern site boundary near the airport should be not be easily accessible.

3.9 Visitor Parking & Services

It is likely that visitor use of Point St. George will continue to increase and, as the number of visitors increases, so will the need for parking areas (including parking to accommodate school buses) and other public facilities and amenities. In addition, current residents of the former U.S. Coast Guard station, now in private ownership, report that they are being disturbed by visitors seeking restrooms and telephones.

Accordingly, the provisions in this plan include installation of restrooms, trash receptacles and recycling containers, and telephones. These public amenities could be incorporated into the visitor center/caretaker facility discussed earlier in this chapter. The existing turnouts on Pebble Beach Drive/ Radio Road are the “natural” sites for parking areas.



***Parking Areas to Accommodate
School Buses are needed.***

For the Point St. George site to accommodate the anticipated visitors there is a need for the standard visitor-services, such as restrooms, trash receptacles and recycling containers, and telephones. This plan generally provides for such amenities.

3.10 Maintaining Visual Quality & Sense of Place

In designing and constructing improvements or in conducting other management activities, maintaining the high visual quality of the site is essential. The quality of the visitor experience at Point St. George depends on the inherent feeling of openness and natural scenic beauty.

The several antennas at Point St. George serve functions in navigation, communication, and scientific research; the location on this headland is highly conducive to these uses. The tallest antenna is also the oldest, installed during World War II. The whip antennas collect data on tidal currents and the Coast Guard uses that real time information to locate lost ships at sea. While these antennas may be considered by some visitors as detracting from the beauty of the site, contacts with the U.S. Coast Guard and other responsible parties indicate that removal at this time is unlikely.

New structures, facilities, and other improvements should be designed to be compatible in color, scale, and bulk with the surrounding visual environment. Possible exceptions to this general rule would be any necessary improvements for the purposes of protecting public health and safety, such as the installation of rock slope protection (e.g., along sections of Pebble Beach Drive subject to erosion), essential road repairs, and parking area improvements.